

Hannah Blythyn AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref OAQ53832

Mark Isherwood AM
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Dear Mark,

I am writing in response to your questions to the Minister for Housing and Local Government regarding support for the Armed Forces community during Plenary on the 15 May. I will take each of your points in turn.

Regarding the new Welsh Veterans Awards I agree that these awards are a welcome opportunity to celebrate the contribution of our veterans to Welsh life. I was pleased that Welsh Government officials attended the launch on 13 February to support the initiative.

You raised questions in relation to the Housing Pathway and support for housing officers. The pathway provides information on the wide range of services available and can be used by the Armed Forces community and also housing staff, so they can help advise and support veterans about what help is available and how to access it.

The Pathway includes information about support organisations such as Alabare, The Royal British Legion and Change Step amongst others. These and other Armed Forces organisations can and do work together with housing officers to support veterans, ensuring they have the support they require. The Welsh Veterans Partnership also provides veteranfocused support working with local authority and housing association officers.

To support awareness amongst frontline staff, Welsh Government funded Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLOs) provide training to Local Authority services on the specific needs of the Armed Forces community, and the breadth of support available. If a Local Authority or

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Housing Association has not received this training I would encourage them to contact their AFLO to arrange.

We engage regularly with the AFLOs and I will ask officials to consider how they can further promote the training package to housing officers. It is important that housing officers are aware of the Housing Pathway as a resource and how they can use it to assist them in their support of veterans with complex needs.

For those leaving Service, the newly created MoD Defence Transition Service now has two officers covering Wales (North and South). Arrangements are in place for these officers to meet key partners, including housing representatives, in June 2019. This will ensure that those vulnerable Service leavers and families with complex needs are linked directly to local providers in the community in which they relocate.

You mentioned the work of Project 360 and veteran-specific support groups. On the 16 May I had the privilege of launching the first Welsh Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report at Woody's Lodge in Colwyn Bay. Woody's Lodge are one of the partners alongside Age Cymru and Age Alliance Wales encompassing the Project 360 partnership. We meet regularly with Project 360 and officials regularly attend their support hubs to hear from staff, veterans and families.

You also referred to the support that one of your constituents had received from Woody's Lodge. As outlined above, I am aware of the valuable service such groups and breakfast clubs provide to veterans and families, offering peer support and access to charitable and statutory services. During our recent scoping exercise to identify the needs of veterans and families, officials attended over 40 groups and engaged with veterans, families and support providers. That work is now being taken forward in partnership with the Armed Forces Expert Group.

Finally, you raised the issue of veteran-based activities and person-focused support. I agree that veterans and families should be able to access information on support groups in their areas. Welsh Government officials are currently working with the Veterans' Gateway and Map of Need project to ensure such information is available to those who need it. This is something that is being examined as part of our scoping work and alongside the Veterans strategy, which we are working on with UK and other devolved colleagues. Yours sincerely,



Hannah Blythyn AC/AM

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